

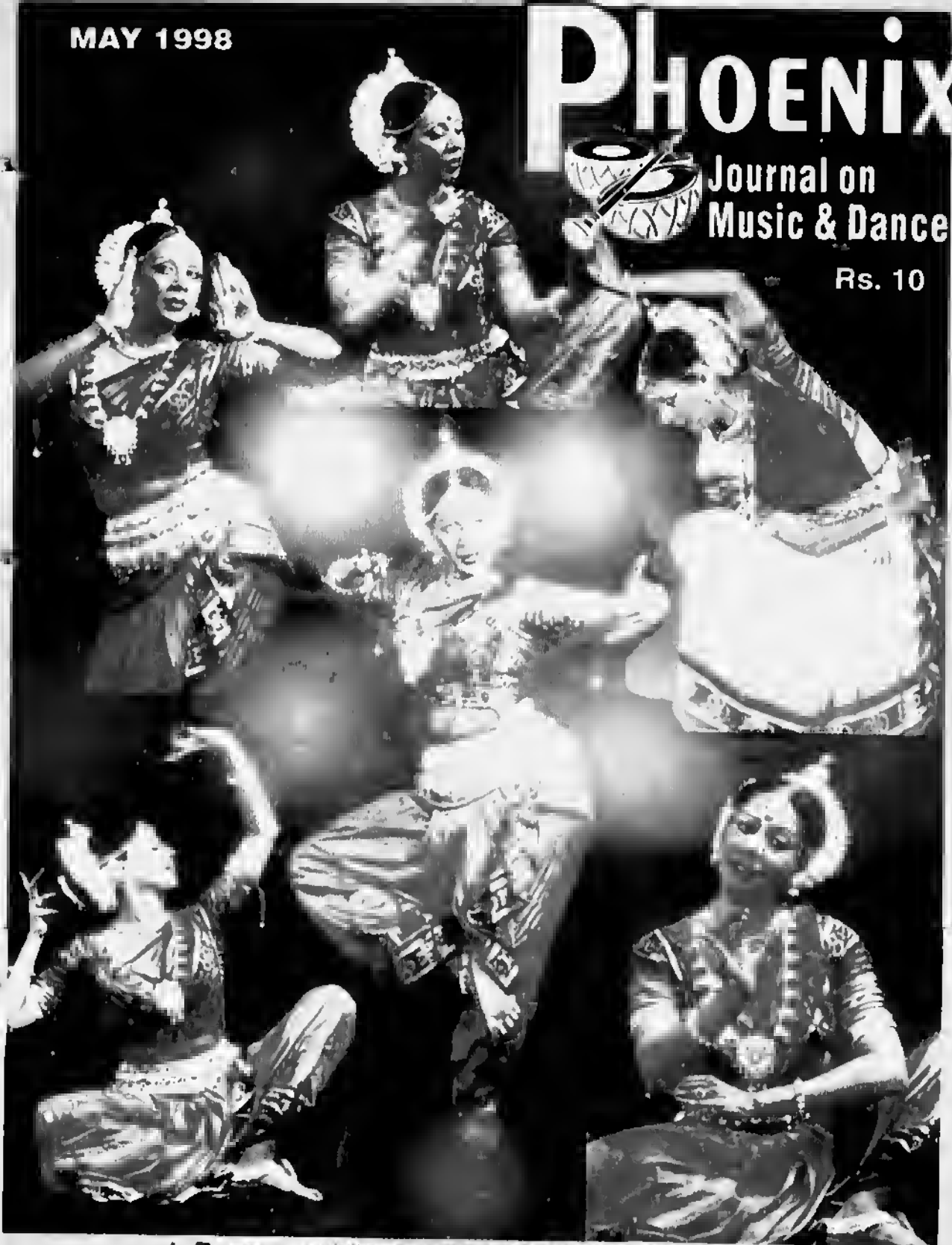
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MAY 1998

PHOENIX

Journal on
Music & Dance

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FROM THE EDITOR

With the re-launching of PHOENIX, arising as it were from ashes, the first hurdle has been overcome. The number was released at a simple ceremony in the sprawling pendul on the Fort Junior College grounds where the annual Sri Ramanavami Music Festival is being held. Hence, there was an ideal backdrop, especially with the

and release of advertisements in its pages, though all these provide the journal with flesh and blood. There is something more crucial if its quality has to sustain readers' interest. That is what will infuse life into it. And that is a task which cannot be undertaken alone by an Editor. There has to be variety in writing and coverage. This can be



Violin maestro praising the PHOENIX pages after it was re-launched by K. Jayaraj, IAS, MD of Mysore Power Corporation Ltd.

day's artiste violin maestro T.N. Krishnan's presence on the dias adding a touch of glamour to the austere setting. Mr. K. Jayaraj, IAS, a known connoisseur of music, who released it made an impassioned appeal for support and patronage to the journal. Cine-artist Shivaram also spoke on the occasion.

Thus the Journal has duly been brought back on the rails. What remains is to steer it through so that it picks up momentum to serve the cause of music, dance and fine arts.

This can be achieved not merely with patronage by way of subscriptions, sponsorships

accomplished only if more and more youngsters start contributing articles, write-ups, features, reviews, critiques, interviews and opinions to its pages. PHOENIX would gladly involve such youngsters to form a new team of serious writers on the twin arts. In it there is not only a fascinating career, but more importantly, lay firm foundation for arts journalism. The prospect of one of them taking over as the Editor of the journal is as bright. It is both a challenge and an opportunity to the Youngsters!

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FESTIVE TIME AGAIN FOR MUSIC

It is festive season for music in Bangalore and Mysore. For long organisations in the twin cities have vied with one another to celebrate Sri Rama Navami with music, presenting concerts by the best in Carnatic style, but certainly not to the description of its Hindustani counterpart. Virtually artistes who will have filled the bill in the prestigious Madras season, closely followed by the Tyagaraja Aradhana in Tiruvayyaru, will make a headline in the City which offers for them almost as many venues as there are extensions. The situation in Mysore is no different, the famous Prasanna Sitaranga Mandiram set up by the legendary Bidaram Krishnappa and buttressed gradually by the efforts of his are disciple T. Choudaiah, giving the lead.

This year's celebrations has a special significance, two major organisations slated for their jubilee. For the Sri Ramaswami Mandala, Chamarajapet. It is the diamond jubilee, a round 60-day fare marking the occasion. The Sri Ramaswami Samithi of Seshadripuram has as ambitious a programme to herald its golden jubilee. With minor exceptions, almost everyone who figures in the one invariably is listed in the other.

Predictably, a saxophone recital by **Kadri Gopalnath** set the auspicious tune for the festival at Chamarajapet. Despite its inherent limitations, Gopalnath has adapted the western instrument to suit the demands of the Carnatic style, the facile way in which

customary Vatapi (Hamsadhvani) was integral being a case in point. What followed was a familiar canvas, the alaps for Saramati (Mukshamagalala) and Brindavana-Saranga not excepted.

The duet by **C. Saroja** and **C. Lalitha** was as spirited, though the timbre has of late lost its glimmer. But what a handsome start the Nata piece Ninnu Bhajana gave them. It had a pleasing impact, the following Bagayanayya (Chandrayothi) standing out for its lyrical charm. Thodi was as good in its format (Srinivasa), though it was the emotional touch in the kriti that lent a dignified air to the rendition.

T. Rukmini and **T.N. Krishnan**, both violinists of reckoning, were listed on consecutive days and both lived upto their reputation. In Sriranjini (Bhuvanilasu) and Kalyani (Nilhichala), the former showed that her touch was as sure as it was when she had made a mark as a vocalist. Krishnan came out in brilliant colours as he intimated the classic Bhairavi Swarajati Ramakshi. The steady pacer and the elegant bowing at once registered his class.

The Dasharagamalika piece gave a flying start to **Aruna Sayeeram's** vocal recital. A string of familiar ditties followed, each in her known masculine gusto. Hemavathi was the only raga that received a detailed airing. It was a satisfying number. **Saralaya Sisters Kavita** and **Triveni** at once revealed that

they have not been able to overcome stylisation. Though the pieces in Nata, Gnana, Ranjini and Vasantha were dispensed of in unison, the rendition could not rise above the common place. But the alap for Shahana was redeeming, some sensitive 'sangatis' enriching its portrayal.

But **D. Balakrishna**, son of veena maestro V. Duriswamy Iyengar, gave enough hints to suggest that he was shaping to be worthy of the hallowed inheritance. If his Shanmukhapriya (Marivara) was robust in its rural overtones, his Bilahari (Najivadhara) bristled with lively flourishes. It was a reassuring concert.

Papanasham Ashok Ramani is another vocalist who had shown early promise. But his recital in the series belied that hope. Neither of the alaps for Shahana or Thodi could stand the test of 'Srutti'. What the absence of a 'Tambura' can wreak? The kritis, however, were true to form. But that alone cannot take a vocalist anywhere. Veteran **T.V. Shankaranarayana** struck a familiar note both in his repertoire and the style of singing. Mahaganapathe (Hamsadhvani) gave him a lilting start. Thereafter it was the routine, even the 'swara' passages for Pantuvarali going on predictable line. But his alap for Muhana (Muhana Rama) brought some freshness to the rendition, some spiralling 'sangatis' lending a delicate touch to the raga.

28th Musician Conference

The Karnataka Ganakala Parishath Annual earlier in the year was a gala affair, its academic discussions providing food for thought and the choicer musical fare enriching aesthetic experience. It was also an occasion to honour some senior artistes along with the conference President, Vainika R.K. Srinivasamurthy who was invested with the title "Ganakala Bushana".

Besides the customary key-note address, the morning academic sessions included presentation of papers by S. Shankar (Vocal Music), Sama Sudhendra (leading musical instruments), and Bangalore K. Venkataram (Percussion instruments). A Seminar on "Music during the last five decades" also aroused considerable interest.

The evening concert time was divided between some promising youngsters and veterans. The first part of the concerts were of no mean order, V. Kalavali and V.K. Gopal (Vernat) proving they were no novices. But the accompaniment provided in either case was a wash-out, making one wonder about their credentials.

The veterans' section had its absorbing moments, though the initial verna recital by Conference President R.K. Srinivasamurthy, obviously due to exhaustion and disturbing hiccups cut it short, was on a low key. But Neela Ramagopal, the popular duo D. Sesharhari and D. Raghavachari of Hyderabad, and flute N. Ramani regaled the audience with some solid music.



Clip of the old Idark : D. Balakrishna (Verna) in concert, flanked by V.S. Rajagopal (Mridanga) and S. Madate (Gitar)

Though confined to compositions in Kannada which somewhat restricted the scope for improvisation, the Mysore duo R.N. Thyagarajan and R.S. Taranatham lived up to their singing with some stirring alapanas. But the piece de resistance was the concert of veteran R.K. Srikantan. An impartial varnam (Mandari) was followed by a millicking Nata piece (Khamka Jampa) which had an electrifying effect, the maestro driving home the point that physical weakness and the like are only for the faint hearted. Disposing of Sarasudala (Saramati) and Bhajare (Muhana Kalyani) with casual disdain, Saveri was given a spurious airing, the raga's structural granuleur standing out in relief. The stately kriti Sri Rajagopala was invested with a leisurely pace, the crisp 'niraval' and the 'swara' passages enriching its modal frame. It was a masterly display of aesthetic sensibilities in which R.S. Ramakanth's sustained vocal support and nimble violin forays of M. Chandrasekharam were the other highlights.

The concert sessions, however, were not free from

distortion, a 'sugam sangar' interlude magnifying it. Even when this semi-classical form was introduced for the first time during the previous conference, there were some murmurs. It became more vocal this year, the avoidable sound and fury associated with the form irritating to many listeners accustomed to the soothing classical mode.

While a few among them registered their protest by silently staying away from the high decibel line, one loud, senior, long-serving offire-bearer of the Parishath not only expressed resentment, but suggested to this columnist that he write strongly against such an imposition. Surprised, the scribe questioned the latter why the former who was vested with an authority, could not have stopped it in the preliminary stage itself. The person pleaded helplessness as "it would be futile, my voice would be a cry in the wilderness". Obviously, there were compulsions which were stronger than aesthetic sensibilities. One had to grin and bear it as many victims of the situation did!

WORTHIES ENLIVEN KINKINI NRITYOTSAV



Rama Venugopal

The year's agenda for dance could not have asked for a more enduring fare than the Kinkini Nrityotsav. The annual festival is so well-organised, so full of promise that it is awaited eagerly by dancers and dance-lovers alike. The sight of a discerning audience turn-out day after day at the two-part festival, each sponsored by a different

patron, itself was most heartening, a happy augury for the sustenance of this fascinating art in this part of the country.

The bill of fare, as usual, unfolded familiar names, names which have unfailingly lived up to a reputation, doing proud to the respective gurus. Among the locals was Petite Padmini Sirish as lively as ever. In the varnam Velanai varu (Vachaspati), she proved that her touch in Nritta is as sprightly as ever, while her expression for the "Ethukadi" Thedinen Kannamal, has not lost its verve. Rama Venugopal appeared as confident, a sure sign of progress as evidenced in the demanding varnam "Sakhiye" (Shankarabharanam).

Rama's guru Rangashree of Kinkini, one of the most enthusiastic dancers, was as thorough in her rehearsals, evidenced in the casual manner she disposed of an array of 'Korvais' in the varnam. Yet she could do with a degree of restraint if her presentation has to gain in aesthetics.

And it is here that the



Padmini Sirish

irrepressible Malivika Sarukkai senses. Whether it is a kriti like Shamlha Mahadeva (Pantavarali) or the stately Varnam Swamini Rammunave (Khamach), her mastery over the idiom is indisputable, a tant Nritta matching the eloquent Abhinaya. Even a simple bhajan Thumaki Chelata gains dancerly stature when she is in her elements.

Ananda-Shankar Jayant of Hyderabad is another Bharathanattiyam artiste who strikes a stance that endures. Though her card did not include a varnam, familiar pieces like Adidano Ranga (Brindavanasaranga) and Dikkuthariyala Kattil were interspersed with an adequate dose of Jathis to lend



Nirupama-Rajendra

credibility to her dancerly perceptions. Her Geeto-jadesha, an "Ekahara" revealed that Ananda is no novice in choreography either.

The Kathak interlude by Nirupama and Rajendra was as rewarding a visual treat. The initial Dayani-Bhavani (Adana) itself created an awesome impact and it speaks for the artistic skill of the couple that they saw to it that the effect provided. In Kalanetra (Malkons) Rajendra proved that he can match the vivacity of his spouse in portraying the multi-faceted imagery of Shiva convincingly. But the day belonged to Nirupama. The subtle nuances with which she portrayed "Ek Nari" (Ghazal) had a touch of class, at once proving that Kathak had a potential that was in no way inferior to any other form.

Padmini Ravi excels

One could not have sought a more exciting finale to the successful festival than "Naukaacharitam", the celebrated opera of Thyagaraja. It was choreographed by Padmini Ravi as no "Ekahara" for herself. The deft choreography testified to her artistic sensibilities.



Rangaskree

The theme itself is not much different than a "Rasa Leela". Here the whole episode takes place on a 'nouka' (boat). It is this location that provides the irrepressible Krishna enough scope to let loose his mischief on the hapless gopis who are also adrift on the boat with himself.

To tease them out of their wits, he causes a leakage in the boat and drives them to do the unthinkable to save themselves from drowning. In his caprice he suggests that the only way to plug the leakage would be for them to strip and hand over their garments for the purpose and the drama that unfolds embarrasses them as much as it amuses Krishna.

Thyagaraja has conceived it as an opera, thankfully not for a play. But in Bharathanatyam, Padmini has displayed how dignified the treatment could be. Yes, Padmini's choreography is



Anand Shankar Jayant

crisp and unambiguous, the idiom used admirably to depict the erotic sequence convincingly. Whether portraying the capricious Krishna or the naive gopis, her depiction using the fully array of 'hasthas' and appropriate 'sthanakas' left a lasting impact, in which the musical score by Dwaraki Krishna-swamy played a no insignificant role.

Chandee

QUIZ ON GHARANAS

Try and guess the premier 'Gharanas' in Hindustani music. (Gharana is a school or a style of singing)

1. A Gharana that makes the simple seem complex. Intricate 'taans' sung from the very beginning. 'Short taans' and fast 'sargams' are some of its major features.
2. A contemplative style that not only pleases but soothes and elevates the mind. An 'alap' that is built on the principle of architectonic 'tihadat' in a systematic note by note elaboration of a raga.
3. A school that distinguishes itself by its intricate sub-divisions of the time cycle. Each of these sub-division provides a complex patterning of rhythm and melody.
4. A Dhrupad based 'alap' where the non-tham syllables help distinguish the Dhrupad style. Supposed to have descended from Miyan Tan-Sen and down the line from his daughter Sariswati.
5. One of the oldest 'gharanas' and referred to as the 'mother gharana'. It uses fine 'boltans'.

Quiz Master

(Answers next month)

NIRUPAMA "DANCE EXCHANGE" WINS PLAUDITS IN UK



Nirupama at Rehearsals for "Mala River" Project

Nirupama Rajendra, a noted exponent of both Bharata natyam and Kathak, was sometime ago invited by SAMPAD, a leading Indian arts agency of England to work with it for facilitating a comprehensive dance programme involving performance, choreography and education.

The projects she was involved in included: choreography and performance of 'Mala', blending Kathak and Bharatanatyam; 'The Goddess of "Mala River" Education Project. This brought together Indian and Western music and dance traditions in secondary and primary schools, culminating in a performance by the children and Nirupama at Britain's most prestigious venue - Birmingham Symphony Hall.

Choreographing a new creative dance piece 'Malar Chalar' for the SAMPAD Shakti Youth Dance Company was itself exciting. Performed at Walshall Asian Arts Festival and The Dance Exchange, Sandwell Asian Arts Festival; as well as a range of performances in Birmingham and across the country, was a fulfilling, as much to the enthusiastic children and Nirupama.

Phoenix, The monthly journal dedicated to fine arts comes to you with more exciting writings and brighter colour illustrations. Subscribe and book your copy well in advance.

The reaction of some eminent men in the field is best exemplified in the letters below:

The event went smoothly and has received positive comments from a range of people. We are extremely grateful for your support; an event of this nature would not have been feasible and the success would not have been possible without an united effort.

The project has been a rewarding experience for us at SAMPAD, & we hope for you too.

Clarie Hicks

Education & Outreach Co-ordinator

Thankyou for the wonderful 3 days of dance in our school.

The children enjoyed every minute of the work with you. Linda (the Class Teacher and PE Co-ordinator) has come away from your sessions enthused about dance, and with lots of ideas and additional skills, which she will use in her own PE/Dance lessons and also share with the staff at staff training sessions.

I was so impressed with the quality of your work, your serious yet enjoyable approach affected the children, who also took the work seriously. They concentrated, their body awareness increased and their self confidence grew. They learned and achieved a great deal.

Denise Richards

Headteacher

MUSIC AND RADIO

It is no exaggeration that whenever there is a change in the broadcast schedule, it is to the disadvantage of musicians and music-lovers. The latest tidings from the I & B Ministry are in keeping with this trend. The two major music slots, viz., the National Programme and the South Zone hook-up on Saturday and Sunday nights respectively are seemingly being dispensed with. Instead there would be a one-hour slot each day, one for the Hindustani and other for Carnatic. On the face of it is a retrograde move in the context of national integration.

For radio listeners in this part of the country, this should cause no surprise at all. They have reconciled to the fact that in the new dispensation music has ceased to enjoy any preferential treatment. In the pre-independence days the main thrust was music. It enjoyed a pre-eminent position in the post-Independence days too. Indeed, the role of the radio in popularising music, both Hindustani and Carnatic styles, can never be over-emphasised. With the result, today one can see a class of listeners which has become addicted to music - the classical variety at that.

Their prospects brightened up in the wake of Vividh Bharati. The new channel was to be the exclusive preserve of light music, a genre which encompasses film songs too. It was then hoped that the original channel would devote more broadcasting hours for classical music. But alas that was not to be. Film music

which was generally used as fillers, started intruding into all kinds of programmes. Music was no exception. And every time extra time was allotted to film music, there would be such a large-scale popular support, that the powers that be conveniently forgot that, more than catering to popular appeal, the radio's role was to create aesthetic taste. Contrarily, every time a new programme was launched, the scribe fell on music so as to accommodate the new programme. Whether it is extension of time for news or it is a sponsored programme which naturally enjoys high priority, it was at the expense of music. So much so, except for the lone one-hour slot once a week the rest are all half-hour fillings. Which is utterly inadequate for a seasoned artiste to either display his prowess or do justice to the art. The predicament of the Hindustani musicians under the circumstances is less enviable as he won't be able to see through the 'vilambit' in the allotted time. How often has a listener not experienced a Hindustani vocalist or instrumentalist falling short of a wholesome treat due to paucity of time!

More perplexing is why the one hour duration that is fixed for music in the morning should be divided into two slots. In recent times, the latter half by and large is invariably a recording from the archives. Yet in the other southern stations like Chennai and Hyderabad artistes enjoy an uninterrupted one hour concert time in the mornings.

Why the Bangalore station also should not do likewise is beyond the imagination of the discerning listener.

Similarly, the occasional foray of archival recordings on Sunday afternoons, has been completely given a go-by. Again, this is to accommodate a film. How such an abridged version can satiate a film buff, especially with the prospect of a fuller, visually satisfying fare at the same hour on the TV is equally mind boggling.

Here again, a few listeners, perhaps, hail the move to broadcast a film track and the powers that be are elated that they have fulfilled a great obligation. Neither seem to realise that the endia can hardly do justice to a visual media. It is a pity that the decency or indifference on the part of the serious listener, as interpreted conveniently as tacit approval. It certainly is not the desideratum, as explained to the local Station Director by a three-man delegation some time ago. Despite his assurances, pretty little has been done to put music on an even keel.

Nor can the much-wanted Prasara Bharati do much in this direction. After all, the arts which are directly involved in filling the bill of AIR programmes, find no representative in it. High time our artistes in general and musicians in particular think of a campaign in this regard if something positive has to be achieved.

S.N. Chandrasekhar

ODISSI'S PROTIMA GAURI

When Protima Gauri Bedi, the visionary Odissi dancer, announced that she would be putting on the bells again after a lapse of nearly a decade, it was no surprise for those who knew her penchant for the arts. At least they were sure it was not like one of those threats regarding the fate of her Nrityagram.

Well, that Saturday came (March 28) and she did put on the bells again to regale a packed auditorium with her vivacious presence. As she entered the stage it didn't take one long to realise that neither age nor the self-imposed hibernation had affected her form or confidence.

In the very first piece, the customary Mangalacharan, commencing with the awe-inspiring line "Manikya-veenam Mupalala", it was evident that she was in complete control of the situation, her form and her stance looking as elegant as that of a thriving ballerina. In her delineation of the masterpiece the characteristic flexions of the torso were precise and neat, not once lapsing into the avoidable, over-sensuous hip movements. Yet the "Thri Bhanga", as it were a spring uncoiling to arrive at one alluring Sthanaka after another, was executed with utmost ease. Indeed, her control over the body was complete, a marvel how the solidity and firmness of footwork lent a chiselled grace and fluidity to her "chalis".



Protima Gauri Bedi

These are the features that give an identity to Odissi, undoubtedly the oldest style of Indian classical dance. Protima has imbibed it all from her famous Guru, the inimitable Kelu Charan Mahapatra. It is well-known that it is his creative talent that helped in lifting the style from the depths of crudity into which it had fallen. He refined

it and lent it a classical status which is second to none in the present context.

His students are undoubtedly amongst the best-known dancers in the country. They include renowned names like the late Samyukta Panigrahi, Kumkum Mohanty, Sonal Mansingh and Kiran Sehgal. The last to join the

distinguished list was Protima.

Yes, Protima was the "junior-most" among the Odissi maestro's students, though by no means the youngest. Unlike many others, she had not started learning dance at the right age, say in the early teens. Rather, far from that, Protima was a late-comer to the fold. The Gurn himself was hesitant in agreeing to teach. He actually had thought Protima too old for the purpose. It was her persistence that won him over. And once he had initiated her into the art, he knew that it was a prize shot.

Having found her feet firm in Odissi and having convinced her Gurn of her determined dedication, Protima started exploring the possibilities of identifying herself completely with the art. Meantime, the working of the ITC Sangeet Research Centre of Calcutta with which she was closely associated, had made a deep impression on her. She wondered why a similar "Gurukula" concept should not be developed for dance as well. Without hesitation, she soon got a blue-print ready. Her proposal found ready response with the Karnataka government, which straightaway granted a 10-acre plot in Hesarghatta, a suburb. There were naturally some protests in local dance circles that a rank outsider should have got away with a prize property. But neither Protima nor the government of the day was deterred. The deal was through and without resting on the oars, Protima fast went about working on her dream project — a dance village.

Nor was she indifferent to local interest. As soon as the first of the chain of gurukulas got ready, the first thing she did was to induct a couple of local exponents to start Bharathanatyam classes. Initially a few archins of the neighbourhood, some of whom have blossomed into competent dancers, were the students.

Meanwhile, Protima had prevailed on Gurn Kelu Charan to make Nrityagram his home and take charge of the Odissi gurukula. Earlier, he had spurned similar proposals of interested local dancers to conduct classes for them. But now, he could not say 'no' to his favourite disciple. Likewise, the dyen of Mahiniattam, Kalyanikunti Amma of Kerala Kakimandalam also arrived and the dance village was in full swing. Some of its students in the different disciplines who were featured in local programmes spoke for the solid work that was being carried on in the respective gurukulas. Even today, the classes are going on, though the intensity has diluted, Protima herself giving rise to doubts by her pronouncements. With the interest of the renowned Gurus also waning due to various reasons and Protima seemingly content in organising the annual Nada Habba, the village has lost some of its glamour.

But her own calibre as an artiste has remained intact. Especially remarkable is her Abhinaya, a branch of dance which cannot be imparted by a guru. It has to be unlearned by one's own experience, the guru only playing the part of a

guide. Involvement here is of utmost importance. Once that is achieved the other ingredients will easily fall in place.

Abhinaya has always been Protima's forte as evidenced in her Pallavis and Moksha, both pregnant with the full gamut of Rasaan. But her interpretation of "Khandila" in the well-known Ashtapadi Yahi Madhava, Yahi Keshava where the other woman is concerned, and "Swadeena Pathika" as exemplified in Kuru Yadu Nandana where the Nayika is the unrivalled beloved of her Lord, showed what a superb artiste she is. The masterly way she used her 'drishti', her 'bhasthas' and curvaceous torso movements enriching the portrayal. It was a treat one would go miles to experience!

Protima is now on a trip to the Manas-Sarovar in the Himalayas. Apparently for meditation. But those who know her obsession for dance would bet that the object of her meditation would be dance-Odissi. And that for sure should make way for many more performances by her. What else should matter to a connoisseur!

Chandler

Music, Dance Institutions are invited to send news & reports on their activities. Articles and features are also welcome.

Cassettes on Music & books may be sent for review.

TUNETUL ENCOUNTER-13 NADASWARAM FOR THE GODS

S. N. Sivaswamy



T. Rajaratnam Pillai

In those days Chennai was still known as Madras. By "those days" I mean the early fifties when I used to work in the Madras Centre of All India Radio, which was located in the dilapidated old two storeyed premises in Marshall Road, where musical luminaries of the day came to perform at regular intervals. And one of these luminaries was the "King of Nadaswaram," T.N. Rajaratnam Pillai, whose birth centenary falls this year.

In those formative years of Radio in a country, preparing a Nadaswaram concert for broadcast was like an adventure. We had to ensure that the microphone coils and the amplifiers could cope with the shrill. There was lengthy experiments regarding the placement of the artistes in the studios, more particularly where the Thavil artiste should be accommodated so that the sound could be under control. Ultimately we had found the right angle and distance and all was fine.

The rich, flamboyant wind music of Rajaratnam Pillai, Subrahmanya Pillai, Sheikh Chinne Munda Sahib, Veera Swamy Pillai, and the other great artistes of the day reached a growing audience. Then we had Dalipati Pichahari, Sheikh Chinne Munda Sahib, Ambalapuzha Brothers, Tiruvizhamizhulai Brothers, Karaiyurechi Arunghalam, Vedaranyam Vela Murthy, Namagiripet Krishnan and a host of other great Nadaswaram Vilwans who provided an endless feast of divine music to the listeners.

Even before I entered the portals of All India Radio, I had heard the recording of Rajaratnam Pillai and was looking forward to meeting him. The memory of meeting him for the first time is indelibly etched in my mind. I can clearly recall the very pleasant, though frail-built, short person who happened to be in the studios when the Director General A.S. Bukhari had come on an official visit. That was the first year of service for half a dozen youngsters like me who had been selected to work as Programme Assistants in All India Radio, and Rajaratnam was happy to meet us and talk to us about the greatness of Nadaswaram art. Bukhari bowed to the great Vilwan and started a conversation through an interpreter. Rajaratnam, after his general remarks on music and Radio, swept his arms to indicate us youngsters and said "these are our

precious kids. Please look after them well."

For some reason, my mind associates Nadaswaram with water and movement. The reason for the connection between Nadaswaram and water seems to be easy to guess. One of my most stirring musical experiences is listening to Rajaratnam Pillai playing from the middle of the Teppakkalam, a lake in front of the Kapaliswarar temple in Mylapore, Madras. He was among a series of artistes who performed during the annual festival of the temple. On the road opposite the temple, there was a house rented by one of our relations who had generously invited my wife and me to come every evening and spend the night with them listening to the best of classical music.

It was during one such evening spent with this kind family that we heard T.N. Rajaratnam Pillai at his best. We were waiting for his famous Todi (he was nicknamed Todi Rajaratnam). But that day he thrilled us with Bhairavi which he had chosen as his main raga. I had often heard his exposition of Bhairavi in a four-part gramophone record set, but that day's expanded delineation of the raga was something out of this world. As the raga cascaded across the cool placid stretch of water, the surrounding crowds, expressed their delight with ah's and ah's besides waves of their heads.

shaking with much appreciation.

And so it was with "Tudi Rajaratnam". If he excelled with Bhairavi one day, it was with Kambhoji another day and Kharahara Priya yet another day.

I have always wondered why he was called "Tudi Rajaratnam" when he was equally facile and graceful with any raga. What really mattered was the purity of tone and dexterity of handling of his Nadaswaram notes. I know how difficult it must be to control the Nadaswaram notes as I had once in my neighbourhood a Nadaswaram vilwan who used to wake up his disciple (presumably his son) early in the morning to teach him Nadaswaram. The painful process caused us months of sleepless nights

before a simple Sa-Pa-Sa-emanated from the mvice!

As I said, my mind associates Nadaswaram with water and movement. As a young boy, growing in Malleswaram, I had been an ardent follower of the annual Ganapati festival at the popular temple on the small hilltop. The ten-day long musical season used to culminate with the procession of the Ganesha idol for immersion. In the accompaniment of Nadaswaram by groups of artistes invited from Tiruchi, Madurai etc., The Nadaswaram vilwans formed the vanguard of the procession and we youngsters walked along with them right through, often till the early hours of the next morning thoroughly enjoying the majestic march of music.

In those days, Nadaswaram vilwans did not mind walking while performing and I had the good fortune of walking along with them during wedding processions too. Even to this day, I remember the haunting Shanmukhapriya of Karaikurichi Arunachalam who provided Nadaswaram for the wedding of my sister-in-law at Madurai. Another equally grand occasion I remember was at Madras at another family wedding when Karaikurichi Arunachalam was again present for providing his delectable Nadaswaram fare. I remember that one of the inviters who walked along with me during the procession, nodding his head in appreciation of the Asaveri strains of "Kara Maintidaka" was the violin prodigy, T.N. Krishnan.

GOLDEN JUBILEE OF KESHAVA NRITYASHALA

Keshava Nrityashala, one of the oldest Bharathanatyam schools in the State, is all set to celebrate its golden jubilee this year. The school established and run by Guru H.R. Keshavamurthy, a disciple of Nattiyammur N. Gundappa, was started in 1949 and since grown into a big institution, spreading its wings to the different parts of the City.

While its main centre remains in a non-descript building in Malleswaram, it has its branches in Rajajinagar, ISRO Layout and JP Nagar too, the last two in charge of Shyam Prakash, his son, and Vasanthalakshmi, his daughter, respectively.

During its distinguished service in the field of dance for 50 years, the school has not only presented a long line of aspirants in Ranga Pravesha, but has produced some impressive dance dramas — at the rate of almost one a year. Its new series in this genre in the classic works of noted Kannada poets has won the plaudits of artistes and litterateurs alike. Its aim of familiarising renowned poetries among the discerning has indeed been fulfilled.

The agenda for the year-long Jubilee will include a series of dance recitals by seasoned professionals and promising youngsters, exhibitions on the varied aspects of dance art, seminars on subjects relating to the subject and repeating some of the reputed dance-dramas of the school.

The venues for the functions will be notified in due course. Meanwhile, the dance school requests its alumni to get in touch with the school and extend their co-operation in making the venture a grand success.

CALLING AIR

Despite its casual treatment of music, the indiscriminate power cuts adding insult to injury, radio is still the best bet for some serious, worthwhile music. Hence the relevance of this column for both the artistes and the listeners.

And who could have given a more heartening start to the column than **M. S. Sheela**, one of our most consistent vocalists, in an hour-long recital (Feb. 8, 10:10 a.m.). Sheela was in her elements as she reeled off a dainty piece in *Saraswati* (Koda Bega Divyanti), *Manavamanjula* (Kakilapriya) and *Smarasada* (Bilhari) followed mellifluously, preceded by lilting raga preludes. They made for delightful listening. *Madhyamavati* received a more detailed airing, the bisurely *Dharmasamvardhini* intriguing its modal overtones. A sleek *Niraval* and pulsating 'swara' passages added to the glitter. She was flanked by H. K. Venkataram (violin), N.G. Ravi (mridangam) and Srihari (Khamjiri) who provided restrained support.

Chandram Bhaja (Asaveri) gave an inspiring start to the veena recital of **Manjula Surendra** on the marrow. Her alap for Mohana was not as convincing, though it picked up substantially in the *Thanam*. The kriti *Evarura* was more satisfying, its steady 'laya' standing out in relief. The South Zone hook-up (Feb. 15) had a surprise packet. Meera Shivaramakrishnan is no

stranger to listeners on AIR, Chennai, in short interludes. The longer slot brought the best out of her as evidenced in the chaste *Kedaragoula Varnam*. *Malayamaruta* (Dhanudevvaro) was orchestrated with a rich 'swaraprasthara'. But the piece that heightened Meera's classic touch was *Kalyani*. If the alap itself was haunting for its modal overtones, the masterly *Birana Varu* (Tishra nadai) was at its evocative best. It was a reassuring concert.

On Feb. 18, 9.30 p.m. it was another major concert where **D. Balakrishna** on the veena scaled new heights. After disposing of *Ninnachepa* (Mandari) and *Ramabhirama* (Darhar) in racy style, he

settled down to a meditative *Thodi*. The alap glowed with lovely cadences, a short *Thanam* enhancing its emotional appeal. *Krishnam Bhaja*, one of the favourites of his late father (Dr. V. Doraswamy Iyengar) had its vintage quality.

Sarod artiste **Rajeev Varmanth** is known as much for his technical finesse as his serious concern for the form and content of a raga. His *Shuddha Asaveri* number (Feb. 15, 8.35 a.m.) was no different in its sensitivity and evocative touch. If the *Tams* in the 'vilambit' showed a ringing flourish, his 'drut' ang made me feel as though his fingers were flying with as much grace and felicity as that of his *Talada* 'sathi'-Ravindra



M.S. Sheela

Yavagal. It was again the celebrated Ammaravamma of Thyagniah (Kalyani) that gave a flying start to Srirama Gangadharan (of Madras) in his South Zone hookup (March 1, 10 p.m.). The Ahiri piece Mayamma was as eventive in its lyricism. The alap for Kamhmi was true to form, but a bit long-winding. The kriti Adumdeivam vanchel for authentic 'patanthara', the 'swara korvais' testifying to a solid foundation.

R.S. Rumananth's Arahhi (Gourishaya Namasthe) was a wrighty piece (March 7, 9:30 a.m.) to establish his credentials as a vocalist of class. Shanti Sharma obviously is another vocalist who has not received her due. Her Yaman in the National programme the same night stood out for its tonal flourishes and 'raga bhav'. It was vintage music. Her Nand number was evocative, raising the concert level to its pristine precincts of good listening.

The unfailing **Nagamani Srinath** (March 10, 8:35 a.m.) made a leisurely start with Mamavasada (Kannada). Her alap for Simhendramadhyama glowed with a dignified aura, the familiar Ninnenammithi millicking with subtle 'niraval' and sparkling 'swara' passages. The slow tempo was in tune with the character of Nalinamakriya (Neenupokshe). It was an emotional outburst, reaching its crescendo in the cultivated vocalism of Nagamani. M. Nagaraj's violin forays right through were as consistent as that of the vocalist.

The South Zone hook-up (March 15, 10 p.m.) again



Dr. Rajeev Taranath

fielded an artiste from Madras. Violinist **V. Balaji** is sure both in his technique and firm as could be visualised in his Shukha-pantivarali (Kannada). It was melitative in its overtones. His alap for Kharaharapriya (Chekkani Raja) was as effusive in its impact. The stark 'niraval' and crisp, 'swara korvais' enriched its aural effect. T.N. Seshagopalan's Shankara bharanam in a recording (March 17, 8:30 a.m.) revelled in its sizzling 'sangatis'. The kriti Enduku Peddalu was especially enjoyable due to the sparkling 'swaraprasthara'. It was the same Shankara bharanam (Edutanilachite) that lost a lilting charm to the veena recital by **M. R. Sashikant** (March 18, 8:35 a.m.). His alap was in good shape, though the kriti itself lacked the same pep. The Shanmukhapriya piece Marivere had given Shashi

kant a millicking start, far more steady in the delineation than in his earlier outings.

ESSENCE

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SWISS TEACHING ASSIGNMENT FOR PADMINI RAO



Padmini Rao

The increasing number of our dance gurus being invited to conduct refresher courses for dance schools run by NRIs shows the growing interest of foreigners in our art. Already popular gurus like Maya Rao, Narmada, Padmini Ravi, Padmini Ramachandran, Bhanumathi, Nirupama-Rajendra, Shubharani Bhat, et al, have been regularly going abroad to fulfil such assignments. The number of their students abroad is also growing, culminating in exchange visits.

To this distinguished list has been added the name of another senior guru. She is Padmini Rao, a senior disciple of Tanjavur Kittappa Pillai and the Director of Ponnaiiah Lahthukala Academy. She has just left Europe, her first visit abroad.

Padmini will be conducting refresher courses in Bharatha natyam in Switzerland (for Yoga Centrum), Amsterdam (for Greta Hissla and Rajamani Khulsi), Den Haag (for Vinayaka Indiasa Dans Group), Leihler Darp (for Nupur Dancer School of Bharathanatyam), and Paris (for Jeeva). The course in each location will be of one-week duration.

Padmini will be away for six weeks and is expected to return in June second week.

AGENDA FOR MAY:

Devagiri Saugeeth Sahha

19th Main Road, BSK II Stage, Bangalore

Thursday, May 7 at 6 p.m.

Smt. Vijayalakshmi Subramanyam-Vocal
Sri H. K. Narasimha murthy-Violin
Sri Arjun Kumar-Mridangam

Malleswaram Saugeetha

Sahha, (GIPA hall, Malleswaram)

Sunday, May 17 at 4.15 p.m.

E. N. Sitarman Memorial concert
Sri G. Srikanth-Vocal and Party

Sunday, May 24 at 4.15 p.m.

Sri R. K. Srinivasa murthy-Veena and Party

Percessive Arts Centre

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Composite programmes to highlight Achievements in Percussive Arts—50 years

(May 24 to Tuesday, May 26)

Wednesday, May 27, 5.30 p.m.

Palani Subramanyam Pillai Award to

K.N. Krishnamurthy

Instituted by Ramasudha Charitable Trust of Smt. Susha Rao and Dr. A.H. Rama Rao

Thursday, May 26, 6.30 p.m.

K.Vasulha -Vocal

A. P. Srinivas -Violin

B.R. Srinivasan-Mridanga
Guruprasanna-Ghata

Saturday, May 30, 9.30 a.m.

Symposium on "Contribution of Nagaswaram to Carnatic Music"

11.30 a.m. - "Anga & Akshara"

demonstration by

Hariwaramangalam A. K. palanivel.

5.30 p.m. **Flute recital by**

T.R. Srinath & Party

Chowdaiah Memorial Hall

Monday, June 1, 6 p.m.

K. Putta Rao memorial Pulghat
Maniward to

Hariwaramangalam A.K. palanivel.

Special feature "Nada-Laya-Natya", produced by A.K. palanivel.

OBITUARY

In the death recently of C.R. Acharya in Ahmedabad, the country has lost a well-known exponent of Kuchipudi. Acharya who was earlier a member of the faculty in Darpana Dance Centre of Ahmedabad, had specialised in the flamboyant "Simharana dana" variation of the ancient Amihra style. It used to be an eye-filling experience to watch the diagram of a lion or a peacock as the case may be, take shape on the dancer's surface as the dancer went about executing the particular number. Acharya was perhaps the last exponent of the technique.

Though in the present context, the technique has lost favour with dancers, in the late seventies and early eighties a couple of our dancers like Usha Datar, Usha Radhakrishna and Veena Murthy had invited the maestro at different points of time to organise workshops in the technique. It had attracted quite a few aspirants too. Alas, it is almost a forgotten technique today.

RECREATING AURA OF A "PARAMPARA"



Chatur-Sujan-Dinarang Ek Parampara by Aditi Upadhyay

If you have not heard of Chatur-Sujan-Dinarang and remain ignorant of their contributions, then you have just missed a unique programme, unique in format and presentation. A programme that educated and entertained.

"Chatur-Sujan-Dinarang Ek Parampara" was conceived and presented by Aditi Upadhyaya, a well-known Hindustani vocalist of Bangalore along with 20 other students of the style.

Presented on February 28 at the JRD Tata auditorium, the programme was co-sponsored by Sursagar and NIAS (National Institute of Advanced Studies).

In an age where solo concerts and 'jugalbandis' rule the concert stage, the choral presentation interspersed with individual 'bandishes', came across with innovative freshness.

For Aditi, daughter and disciple of Pandit Dinkar Kaikini, "the programme evolved with a previous need to share the contributions of Chatur Pandit V.N.

Bhatkhande, Sujan Pandit S.R. Ratanjankar, and Dinarang Pandit Dinkar Kaikini, three master composers of this century".

To briefly recapitulate the contributions of these three 'vaggeyakars' (composer-musicians), Chatur Pandit, Pandit V.N. Bhatkhande, a criminal lawyer by profession, gave up his lucrative practice to devote himself entirely in the pursuit of systematising, documenting and popularising music in the early 19th century. He was a pioneer in giving Hindustani music a grammar to refer where none existed, the notation system, a sign system for a composition to be written in a particular 'taal', the 'rang ang' theory and many such significant innovations that are depended upon even today.

Ratanjankar, known as Sujan, was a brilliant pupil of Chatur Pandit. He has over 450 compositions to his credit and continued Chatur Pandit's zealous effort to popularise music and uphold institutional training through the Bhatkhande Music Colleges across the country.

Pramila Inchan

Pandit Dinkar Kaikini is one of today's most respected composer-performers. In true parampara style he has absorbed the tutelage of the two great masters and evolved as an extremely erudite and creative artiste, for whom "the power to grasp a flash of creativity is one's own effort, the rest is "God's gift".

This parampara musical journey from Chatur to Dinarang had the participants and audience enthralled in experiencing a wide spectrum of their compositions, ranging from 'sargams', 'tharanas', 'bhamaar', 'khyahandishes', 'dadras' and 'bhajans'. After two and a half months regular riaz, making this programme happen along with Aditi were her students and disciples of Pandit Ramarao Naik, Pandit Arjuna Naidu, Pandit Vinayak Turvi and Pandit Parameshwar Hegde.

Lending support were Gaurang Colical Udayraj Karpur and Gnanamurthy Vaidya (Tahala), Kulkarni (Dholak) and Vyasaamurthy Katti (Harmonium).

A commentary on the lives and times of these stalwarts added information whilst the sketches by Lalitha Shankar, the backdrop and stage decor by "Cinema Hymli" lent the right measure of aesthetic pleasure.

One hopes the City will witness more of such programmes rendering intellectual and emotional delight.

A DELIGHTFUL REVIVAL

Pratibha D'Souza

For the past five years, the students of the College of Fine Arts, Chitrakala Parishath, had no opportunity to display their works at the academic level. However, this year a welcome departure was made. Three consecutive exhibitions held recently have broken the deadlock.

It all began with five enterprising under-graduate final year students presenting "Ojas" from March 2 to 10. Artists Annapama, K.R., Malini S, Mario D'Souza, Nirali Lal and Rupashri called it an "Aura of expressions".



Sculpture 'Ojas'

Having put together this sponsored show in barely a month's time, the participants however enjoyed the good response that resulted in some encouraging incentive.

"Chitrakala-98" from March 11 to 14 was another commendable effort that brought together approximately 300 works.

A contribution made by students from the BFA third year to the fifth year levels. Organised in record time of two days, this academic presentation gave the students a confidence to achieve the unthinkable. As some of the participant students expressed, "it was a good feeling for both students and parents."

A good exposure to the students indeed. Both the shows had works ranging from paintings, sculptures to prints that displayed a virtuoso command over the many available materials and medium both in skill and aesthetics.

As the students rightly felt, it gave them a wonderful opportunity to be exposed to



Water Colour painting
Chitrakala '98

the techniques of exhibiting and selling".

Finally, to seal this delightful revival the post-graduates plan to come out with their works from mid-April for a week.

Here's wishing many more academic shows in the coming years and for those who may be interested in encouraging a budding artist's hand at art, can always contact the students at the College of Fine Arts.

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Able or Unable to reach the Goal

Few just settle for the path.

Happiness we derive in exploring the path

Inspires us to attain the Goal,

*and it is a great joy for us to share this
happiness with one and all.*

*Nirupama
Rajendra*

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